

LOWER PAXTON TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
Special Meeting
I-83 Project

June 13, 2007

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Fredrick Lighty
Dennis Guise
Richard Beverly
William Neff

ALSO PRESENT

Mike Hess, HRG
Chip Millard, Dauphin County
Dianne Moran, Planning & Zoning Officer
Lori Wissler, Planning & Zoning Officer
John Rautzahn, McCormick Taylor
Cheri Fogarty, Community Planning Consultants, Inc.

Call to Order

Mr. Lighty called the special meeting of the Lower Paxton Township Planning Commission to order at 5:50 pm, on June 13, 2007 in Room 171 of the Lower Paxton Township Municipal Center, 425 Prince Street, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Introduction

Cheri Fogarty and John Rautzahn were present on behalf of McCormick Taylor to discuss the East Shore Section 1 Portion of the I-83 Project. Ms. Fogarty explained that she is responsible for municipal coordination and has been meeting with Township Staff monthly and briefing them on the project, which extends from the I-81 split to the Derry Street interchange. She explained that it is very early in the process, and there are no definite answers, but more suggestions and ideas. There will be some neighborhoods and businesses impacted by this project, and there will be some special meetings for that.

Mr. Rautzahn explained that McCormick Taylor is the consultant hired by PennDOT to do the preliminary engineering which is the current stage where environmental clearances are obtained, then final design which is the phase that produces the right-of-way plan to provide the right-of-way, and then the bid process. The preliminary engineering is the first four years of the 12-year program.

Discussion

Mr. Rautzahn stated that the project is Section 1 of the Master Plan prepared several years ago. The I-83 Master Plan covers from just south of the New Cumberland exit up to I-81, broken into four sections. East Shore Section 1 is the first section to be done because it is the oldest, has been a maintenance problem and has been resurfaced three times in 12 years. The Master Plan used a traffic model that shows the system and

very clearly shows where the problems are, and when it is fixed, it can easily be seen on the model. Mr. Rautzahn stated that they have done a more extensive traffic count, working with the Tri-County Planning Commission. That has shown more accurate information. The information in the Master Plan is still accurate in what it calls for to correct the issues, such as the number of lanes.

Mr. Rautzahn stated that there are three lanes in each direction between Derry Street and Union Deposit Road, and then it goes to two lanes between Union Deposit Road and I-81. The Master Plan recommended four lanes between the interchanges of Derry Street and Union Deposit Road. The fourth lane picks up and drops at the interchanges, just like the third lane does now. Then going north, the fourth lane picks up again between Union Deposit Road and Route 22. It will then be four lanes north of Route 22. Under the bridges of the interchanges, it will be three lanes.

Union Deposit Road Interchange

Mr. Rautzahn stated that he was told by the Lower Paxton Township Police Department that the highest number of accidents is at the Union Deposit Road interchange. There is a lot of traffic there, and that will continue. What is proposed is a Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI) to replace the two signals with one. All the turns will be double turns. Mr. Lighty noted he is in favor of that especially since he has seen what has been done in Williamsport. Mr. Rautzahn stated that one of the challenges is the high volumes of traffic, and the improvements have to be constructed while maintaining traffic. The goal is to maintain all lanes of traffic during construction. There may be some lane closures over-night, but not during peak hours.

Mr. Rautzahn stated that the interchange work includes work to the intersections with East Park Drive and Scenery Drive. There needs to be dual turn lanes to the north. They are exploring alternatives, such as cutting across mid block, while doing the least harm. That is an important link in the Township and it has to be improved. Ms. Fogarty asked if there are any sensitivities in that neighborhood. Mr. Lighty stated that the businesses would like it if the traffic were improved, but wouldn't like it if they lost their business to the roadway.

Mr. Lighty asked what the other options were. Mr. Rautzahn stated one consideration is to make Scenery Drive a cul-de-sac or a one-way north bound to make a continuous movement for the north bound and the left turn. Another option is similar, but realigns it somewhat and uses Avila Road as the main access. Another option is to build a connection mid-block and removing the northern leg. There were some thoughts of just improving what is there, but that would involve losing the laundromat. Mr. Lighty asked what that would do to East Park Drive. Mr. Rautzahn stated that if there are additional lanes on Union Deposit Road, the next intersection down would need to be signalized.

Mr. Neff asked if the study includes origin/destination studies. Mr. Rautzahn stated that some have been done during the Master Plan work, and noted that most of the traffic is coming and going within this area, and there is some through traffic. Mr. Neff suggested that much of the traffic would be using the Union Deposit Road interchange to go south on East Park Drive. He suggested that there be a north-bound exit only onto Spring Creek Road, and a south bound exit as well. Mr. Rautzahn stated that there are Federal rules for how close interchanges can be. Mr. Millard had concerns that there would be problems with how close the interchange would be to the next exit. Mr. Rautzahn stated that the general rules for interchange spacing is 4-5 miles between interchanges. What is presently in place is only a mile and it would take a very special unique desperate need to get another ramp in between there. Mr. Millard noted that there is a missing ramp from 83 north to Derry Street, and assumed that with the reconfiguration of the Eisenhower Interchange that should be corrected. He noted that may help with Mr. Neff's concern.

Mr. Lighty asked about the Briarsdale Road intersection. Mr. Rautzahn thought there may be a right-turn lane that would be a lane pick-up. McDonald's would lose some of it's buffer. Mr. Lighty noted that that area has some projects underway, and could develop nicely if it had decent access. Mr. Rautzahn stated they are interested in working that information into their project. Mr. Millard noted that there is significant truck traffic in that intersection.

Mr. Millard noted that many people come off the interstate and make a left to go north towards the hospital and apartments. He asked if Avila Road is realigned and ran to Union Deposit Road, is there enough room between the interchange and that area. Mr. Rautzahn agreed it would be difficult, and added that there is no easy answer or straight forward solution to the problems in this area. He noted that the distance might be far enough from the interchange, but it is unclear at this point to give an accurate answer. Mr. Rautzahn noted that there are two mid-block left turns, and one or both may have to be eliminated. He added that the SPUI will affect the spacing in the Avila area because there are two signals there now, and there will only be one further away in the plan. The SPUI will be much more efficient as well.

Mr. Millard noted that on both sides of the highway there is a problem with people exiting the highway southbound to make a turn to go south to Briarsdale Road, or northbound to make a turn to go north towards the hospital. He noted that some people will sit on the ramp waiting for a clearing to cut all the way across to the left turn lane and are not willing to go down to the signal. Mr. Rautzahn agreed that is a big issue, and they have looked at it and may signal-control the off-ramp, allowing them free access.

Mr. Rautzahn stated that the project is the interstate, but any changes made at the interchanges will affect the next intersections, and vice versa. He noted that there will be a solution, but doesn't know what it is yet, since some will cost heavily in right-of-way damages, and that is something they want to minimize.

Mr. Rautzahn noted that tonight's discussion was very helpful and offered to keep the Commission informed and offered to come back at a later time as the project planning progresses.

Route 22 Interchange

There is a full cloverleaf at the Route 22 interchange and small weave lanes under the bridge that are safety issues. There are weaves on top of the bridge that are far below standard, they tend to work, mostly because the traffic is metered to them by the traffic signals. The idea is to turn it into more of an urban interchange with one loop. That loop would be the east and west bound traffic on 22 with a lane pick up and no merge, which would be the fourth lane pick-up south bound. East bound 22 going to south bound 83, is the lightest movement, and would have a standard merge into those four lanes. There will be signals at the north bound exit. West bound 22 would go through ahead of the signal and would not be affected by the signal. Mr. Lighty stated that is a problem because that is the exact same set up as the current Union Deposit Road interchange. With such a short entrance, there will be many accidents. Mr. Lighty commented that he liked what is proposed on the west side of the intersection, and going north on 83 to east on 22 is also good. The real issue is Colonial Road at Route 22.

Mr. Neff was concerned about the intersection of Colonial Road at Route 22 and no matter what is done; the distance is the same and there will be stacking. He asked if there is a significant amount of the traffic that uses the Route 22 exit that intend to go further north. He suggested an exit-only in the area of Earl Drive. That may get that traffic out of the Colonial Road/Route 22 area. Mr. Rautzahn agreed with the observation, but there is a full systems interchange (83/81), a dual acceleration lane merging into one lane within the ramp. There needs to be some space to set the traffic up for the next movement. Mr. Rautzahn noted that they considered running an exit by the church on Colonial Road; however, it doesn't alleviate as much traffic as you would expect. They had also considered a ramp at another location, but the grade is so steep it would just not work. These options were considered and discussed with PennDOT's central office and FHA, and those ideas were dismissed.

Mr. Neff asked if Mr. Rautzahn was aware of the 500 homes going into Stray Winds Farm. Mr. Lighty added that there will also be more than 100 units going into a residential retirement development. Mr. Rautzahn stated that the County model tries to account for vacant land depending on its zoning and what may be in the future. If there is something unusual proposed it could be recalculated, but the land as it is zoned, is accounted for at build out.

Mr. Rautzahn stated that one major challenge is getting traffic through that intersection and to the north or to the east. Mr. Lighty agreed, noting that Elmerton Avenue is also an issue. The proposal in the Master Plan takes the traffic west bound on Route 22 up over. The good thing with that proposal is that it connects Elmerton Avenue

into a signalized intersection. That would make Elmerton Avenue a collector road and not just a local street. Mr. Lighty agreed it should be a collector road. Another idea for that area is to put a continuous flow movement for that left turn. There are challenges with Route 22 because there are so many traffic signals in a row that the traffic won't be able to get to the improvements because of the restraints. The three signals use the concept of continuous flow, allowing Route 22 to run pretty well while allowing access to Colonial Road.

Mr. Rautzahn noted that all the frontage properties from Colonial Road to I-83 on the north side will be lost under either circumstance. The Red Lobster is lost in the at-grade option, and could probably be saved under the other option. With the research so far, they are satisfied with the traffic end of things. Mr. Lighty stated he would not want to lose a large business that has an obvious loyal following.

Mr. Millard asked about the vehicles that wish to access 83 from the south. Mr. Rautzahn stated that because of the cemetery it will probably be right-in/right-out, but agreed that there are some problems there. There will have to be some improvements to the intersection to the east because it will replace that intersection.

Mr. Rautzahn stated that the tri-intersection is the one that works the best from a traffic standpoint. The other works better for westbound Route 22. Mr. Lighty agreed that there are some takings that are just unavoidable, and there are some that could be avoided with a little more engineering. Mr. Rautzahn agreed and noted that they are prepared to do that extra work to save existing properties. Mr. Rautzahn noted that he has spoken with the Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Board who has informed him of the Greenway Plan. That was a big help in the planning of the interstate work. He added that he is very interested in working with the Township to see where the people will walk or bike to make sure the new bridges will accommodate those people both on and below the bridges. The bridge over Elmerton Avenue will be replaced and Elmerton Avenue will be tied into a signalized intersection.

Mr. Lighty asked where the money will come from. Mr. Rautzahn stated that he has been told by PennDOT that this project is top priority to HATS. Mr. Millard noted that it is a high priority, but there is concern about the cost.

Mr. Beverly noted that PennDOT has already had surveyors out in the field.

Mr. Guise asked about the time frame for the project. Mr. Rautzahn explained that there have been spotters out spotting for borings for bridges. The bridges are either being replaced or widened. There will be sound barrier walls built south of Route 22. The wall along Revere Street will go up the middle of the existing road, so there will be issues to be worked out as to accessing those homes along Revere Street, and there may be some homes that will be taken because they sit too close to Revere Street. That is a neighborhood that McCormick Taylor will need to meet with. There will be a public

meeting in the Fall, and they would like the Township to attend the meeting. He noted that Township interests and State interests do not always match, but they would like to agree as much as possible. They would like to be able to show right-of-way and which properties will need to be taken. This matter will be handled delicately, and have the people who can answer right-of-way questions also in attendance. If there are still options at Colonial Road, those plans will be displayed. Environmental clearance should be available early next year. The design field view, or more detailed plans, will be next. HATS will have to take another action to add final design phase to the first four years.

Mr. Lighty asked the relationship of HATS in this process. Mr. Millard stated that PennDOT has membership on HATS, through both the central office and district. All projects need to have funding through the MPO, which is federal and state funding, officially allocated for the project before it can move forward. HATS is the funding body. FHWA requires the local MPO to give its local approval, or TIP (Transportation Improvement Program), to the program. Mr. Lighty stated that by the time the plan gets to the Lower Paxton Township level, it will have been through many other bodies that have very different agendas than Lower Paxton Township. He also stated that the Township has no representation on HATS. Mr. Millard stated that is not totally true because Commissioner Haste and State Representative Ron Marsico have local interests in this project.

Mr. Lighty asked what the Planning Commission can do to assist in the project. Mr. Rautzahn stated that there will be new information monthly. Mr. Lighty asked how often they would like to meet with the Planning Commission. Ms. Fogarty stated that they will meet with Staff once a month, and when Staff feels it is appropriate, they can come back to the Planning Commission. She stated that between now and the public meeting, they will need to meet with the neighborhoods that will be impacted the most.

Mr. Lighty asked about the maps being available to the public. Mr. Rautzahn stated that the maps are continually changing and being updated, and once they have a better idea what will be done, there will be maps made available to put in the lobby.

Mr. Neff noted that there is still a problem with Colonial Road and Elmerton Avenue. There will be a lot of money spent in that area, and nobody exits 83 North to go east on Route 22 because of the congestion. He asked to know how much of that traffic is using Colonial Road, and requested that, if it is significant, an exit only off the interstate be considered. He felt that it needs to be looked at closer given the amount of money being spent on a project of this magnitude. Mr. Rautzahn noted that it is an extremely attractive option, that it has already been explored, and it has been determined that with the other interchanges, weaves and other activities on the highway, not to mention the extreme vertical grades, it would create an unsafe condition. Mr. Neff noted that it was a poor design because there are three lanes northbound, merging down to two, immediately back to three for the Paxtonia exit.

Mr. Rautzahn agreed that this is a major project, and there are construction estimates of \$128 million. Running another lane to Mountain Road and back has been discussed, but they have to draw the line on the project somewhere, so that was not included.

Mr. Millard noted that there is an I-81 widening study going on separately from this project, and this segment is one that is considered higher priority. It could be done if the money is there, after the 83 project is complete.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Hiner
Recording Secretary